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ABSTRACT

This study examines the personal choices of two American Indian men who grew up on different reservations (Hopi and Navajo) in the Southwest. Specifically, the study explores the agendas, opportunities, and decisions involved in retaining or rejecting each man's traditional culture and language. The study was based on discussions with both men over a period of a year that focused on all aspects of their academic and life experiences. Both men were in their late twenties, were educated through high school on their reservations, and were English literate. Both were attending the same university in a nearby large metropolitan city where they were completing advanced degrees. Three primary factors influenced the men in their life choices: parents' level of cultural literacy and participation in tradition, world views of extended families and cultural groups, and personal interests in traditional and nontraditional ways. This study suggests that the subjects' divided interests between traditional and Euro-American ways were a fundamental part of the cultural cohesion and cultural interference that existed within their societies. This study demonstrates that heritage language loss and the lack of cultural transmission do not necessarily come about through cultural discontinuity between the institutions of minority and majority cultures. Elders and relatives can provide support that enhances their traditions and further enculturates their children. This is especially relevant where children are caught between the need for English literacy and the necessity of maintaining and transmitting the heritage language and culture. These two men were able to achieve in both realms without the wholesale replacement of one set of beliefs by another. They chose the best aspects from both traditions to situate their identities at the intersection of two disparate cultures. (LP)

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CULTURAL INTERFERENCE AND CULTURAL COHESION:
Schooling and Traditions in Two Communities

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, March 24 - 28, 1997

Division G: Social Context of Education
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INTRODUCTION

This study presents the personal choices of two young American Indian men who grew up on different Reservations in the Southwest. The project explored the agendas, the opportunities and the decisions they made to retain or reject their traditional cultural ways which sent them from similar places, down different paths to arrive at the same place. As young children beginning their educations, they made conscious choices between traditional values and belief systems, and the structure and organization of Euro-American education. One man lost much of his heritage language and culture while the other retained most of his. Both men became literate in English, were competent speakers of English and pursued advanced degrees in professional studies at the same major university intending to return to their communities.

The premise of the study was that American Indian children make choices about their life paths based on the world views of their caretakers and the dynamics of cultural cohesion and social expectations. These decisions organize their life experiences and reveal their personal and cultural belief systems. The study focused on the cultural interference and cultural cohesion of children growing up on Reservations.

By presenting the life stories of the men, by exploring the language socialization practices, the enculturation patterns and the daily life events, the data will show three primary factors that influenced their life choices: a) their parents' levels of cultural literacy and participation in traditions, b) the world views of the extended families and the cultural groups, and c) their personal interests in traditional and non-traditional ways.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The social interactions of children with care givers, relatives, the extended family and other members of the Heritage Group at large teach the children the values and the belief systems. These form the behavioral constructs they need to know as an integral part of their existence and knowing "how to be" within their environments (Schieffelin, 1990; Ochs, 1990). Language, traditions, storytelling and community events are but a few of the genres in which the cultural ways and the heritage constructs are passed to other members of the tribal groups.

The cultural constructs that constitute the cohesive elements in the cultural organization direct the choices and the possibilities for the children. The directive forces are embedded in the cultural knowledge and are instrumental in the culturally shaped needs of personal satisfaction and in the attainment of goals valued by the society at large (Basso, 1990; Wagner, 1981). Euro-American values and beliefs can take advantage of certain cultural constructs of the group, such as not particularly directing and controlling the actions and social interactions of children, and exert influence on the child. Members of the Heritage Group who strictly adhere to the cultural belief systems can become constrained by the belief systems in their efforts to interfere with or to intervene in outside influences (Crow Dog, 1990). Likewise, group members who advocate a non-traditional set of beliefs are constrained by the cultural cohesion of the group in their efforts to exert outside influences. As social life is contingent upon a fit between an individuals ambitions and the requirements of society, in certain heritage groups, then, children are left with a certain amount of autonomy to make choices about their life paths (Brunn, 1994).

The ideology of School for the most part exists in stark contrast to the tenets of the Heritage Group (Sheridan, 1991). Historically, the language, content and pedagogy of the dominant group have prevailed as the underpinnings of School (Adams, 1988; de Castell & Luke, 1983; Erickson, 1984). In most instances throughout a Heritage Group's ethnohistory, access to literacy and School knowledge was contingent upon children's acculturation to and assimilation by the dominant outside group. In addition to the impact on the culture and the ancestral ways of the Heritage Group, literacy has definite consequences for and contributes to a person's sense of belonging to the group (Crow Dog, 1990; Lame Deer, 1972).

Rotheram & Phinney (1987) contend that "children begin to understand [the] meaning of specific acts in their culture and to structure their world with reference to these meanings. The interpretations that children give to situations in turn influence their behavior" (p. 22). Children make choices based on their belief systems and on their interests about how and to what extent they become involved with education. Values, belief systems and the language of the heritage groups

become laden with positive and negative attitudes in contexts where they are contrasted with those same constructs of the dominant culture. The degree of reflexive interaction between the two cultures varies with, among other factors, the interfacing of the cultural and the sociopolitical forces (Adams, 1988). The experiences and the personal agendas of the individual members, as part of their ethnohistories and in concert with their present situations, combine to affect their language socialization and enculturation processes.

METHODS AND DATA SOURCE

The study was based on discussions with two American Indian men from the Navajo and the Hopi Reservations in the Southwest region of the United States. The conversations occurred over the period of a year and focused on all aspects of their academic and life experiences from earliest memories until the present. Both men were in their late 20's, had grown up and were educated through high school on their reservations. They attended the same University in a large metropolitan city nearby and were in different stages of completion of advanced degrees.

The data source for this study, which came from a larger project (Brunn, 1994), was approximately 30 hours of taped conversation and over 400 pages of transcription. The meetings took place in a comfortable, private setting. The discussions were conducted individually and ranged from 45 minutes to one and a half hours each. A working relationship and a personal relationship was established with both men as a result of the discussions. They were involved in the editing and the acceptance of their individual transcripts, but neither of the men knew each other.

STORIES OF CULTURAL COHESION & CULTURAL INTERFERENCE

Peter grew up in a small Hopi village. His house was modest by Hopi standards. There was no electricity and no plumbing. Life in his early years before he went to school consisted of enculturation to the Hopi ways. His uncles taught him the things necessary for him to get along in their village and in their society. He learned to work in the fields, to respect women, to speak Hopi and to fear the kachinas. He also listened much to his parents and elders when there were gatherings at his house, especially out behind where there was a long wide flat place. The elders would sit there in the evening and on into the night talking and thinking. The talk was mainly centered on reminiscences of time near, past and long ago.

As Peter began to go to school in his first grade year, he made a friend in the upper village. The upper village was a short walk up the hill to the top of the mesa. This upper village was known among both villages as the "progressive" village, while Peter's village was known more for its adherence to the traditional ways. While there were large differences of opinions as to how one should conduct one's life, exemplified in the differences between the two villages, the Hopi cultural way of letting someone alone to her/his own beliefs served to maintain harmony between the two places.

Peter made a friend, Donald, in the upper village who was born of a Hopi man of Peter's clan, and of a Cherokee woman. Donald's father was well educated, had a position in administration and, as such, traveled much around Hopi. One outcome of his absences was that Donald received many new and western things upon his father's return. He had games, a wide assortment of books in English, a TV, a radio and many toys representative of Western culture. Peter spent his first six years of grade school playing and visiting at Donald's house. It was there that he learned most of his English. That is to say, it was in school that Peter learned the rudiments of English, but it was in accompaniment with Donald in the context of play and literacy events that Peter practiced and developed his command of English. A fundamental part of this acquaintance with Donald, and with English and Western models of society, was the ideology of Western culture.

Admittedly, for Peter, the attraction of Western society with its electricity, plumbing, visual media and access to trade book literacy caused a rift in his enculturation into the Hopi way of life. He began to see the extreme poverty in his own home and in his own village, i.e., the lack of modern amenities, and nine people living in a small, two room house. Because of his association with Donald, he spent an unusually large amount of his time away from his own family and village during those important formative years. The result was that Peter began to shun things Hopi, and

to embrace things Western. No one interfered with his actions; to do so would violate the teachings of the Hopi. Furthermore, Donald's father was of the same clan, making him one of Peter's uncles in their kinship structure.

Because education was very important in Donald's house, it also became important for Peter. Education was couched in terms of completion of college, not just the completion of elementary school, or of high school. The contrast between the education of his parents, his relatives and his villagers was great in comparison to the people of upper village. Peter logically made the connection between education and the material comforts that such training could bring, and the 'lack' of conveniences in his own home and village.

In the upper village Peter had time to pursue his own daydreams, to take life more leisurely. He indulged his curiosities of Western culture and society. In the lower village, he was expected to work in the fields, to follow the direction of his uncles, his teachers, and of his parents. This meant that he must speak Hopi, was to conduct himself in the unhurried pace of Hopi, to defer to his uncles and his elders, to comply with their teachings, and to respect their ways of life as a young developing Hopi child.

Peter's life in his early years in the lower village was not all drudgery, however. He had relatives in San Filipe, New Mexico, with whom he would visit each summer. He and his brothers, all five of the boys, would travel to their relative's house for an extended stay. There, they would also work in the fields, but to Peter it was different. Just as work at "Grandpa's" house, in Western culture, was somehow more fun than the same work at your own house, so it was for Peter and his brothers. There was still corn to weed, water to haul, wood to gather, repairs to be made around the house, evening visits, rest time in the hot afternoons, and play activities in the village square. All of these activities were common to both venues.

In junior high, Peter went to a town some distance from his home village. There were predominately Anglo and Navajo people in the town where the bustle of life and commerce went with a rapid pace compared to the lower village. Peter characterized himself as quiet and alone during those two years. His mother was attending the local university, so they stayed in university housing. This meant that they were in an apartment, in a complex with many other apartments. The contrast was great between his former living conditions and context, and this new situation. Gone were the freedoms of going back and forth between the upper and lower villages, the summers spent in San Filipe, the idle afternoons talking and playing with friends and other boys in the square. Gone too, were the uncles, those teachers of things Hopi, the Hopi language, the evenings out behind his house, the models of culture that contributed to his enculturation to Hopi.

His world was supplanted with everything Western and everything that goes into the amalgam of a reservation border town. Although his friendship with Donald introduced and immersed him in Western ideology and Western models of culture, he took those things on his own terms and in his own Hopi context. That is, in the upper village the infusion of Western ideology and models into his development as a Hopi occupied a small part of the context and the time of his life. In contrast to that former life, his new life in the border town was one of total immersion into Western ideology and Western models of culture and society. Except for his brothers and his mother, there was nothing in his realm that was Hopi, or that was there to remind him of his roots. In Peter's terms, he withdrew from the social milieu.

At the end of those two years, he and his brothers and mother moved back to the lower village. There Peter went to high school with many of his old friends. Although there were no schools in the lower village, the high school was a short twenty minutes walk from his house, through the upper village and across the mesa to the next village. Back among familiar places, Peter began a transition from withdrawn to outgoing. He became involved in student government, and excelled in his studies. As he waded deeper into his high school years, he began to feel the exertion of the disparate cultural forces. No longer was he among the Western immersion of the border town, but also he was no longer among his primary Hopi context. The high school population was an admixture of Hopi and Navajos with a few Anglos interspersed throughout the four grades.

His awareness of conflicting cultural forces around him caused him to enter a period of withdrawal from the flow of the student body, and to begin again an alignment with the Hopi. He

did not like what he observed as the social interaction between the two large populations of Indians. The jealousies, the competition, the slandering, the excommunication and the choosing of sides between the English speakers and the John[1] talkers caused him to reflect on the underpinnings of his Hopi culture, the Navajo culture and the Western cultural ways. This was a time of confusion, and this was a period of development and growth both culturally and cognitively. To begin, he saw the falsehoods of the three cultures. The Hopi concept of live and let live was not being practiced by his contemporaries. Through his participation in Hopi ceremonies and events, he learned that the kachinas were not powerful spirits, but men from his village dressed up in costumes and masks. He watched as the Navajo and the Hopi kids drew lines of separation from each other and within their own ranks. The intra cultural divisions were mainly divided along language usage lines. Those who could use English with a great amount of proficiency were considered the informed, the elite, the kids who were progressive and on the track leaving the reservation destined to go to college. The kids who talked John were marginalized within the main flow of the high school. These kids mixed their heritage languages with English, using code switching throughout their speech. They lived in the outer reaches of the reservation, rode long distances on the busses, or lived in the boarding schools nearby the school. Many of the Johns left school in their early years of either junior high or high school. The cohort of Johns within the upper classmen was even smaller and more cohesive.

Peter managed to finish high school, although in his last two years he just scraped by with his grades. He enlisted in the U. S. Navy for a four year tour of duty. In that context he was a definite minority, but by no means the only minority group represented. Throughout those years, far removed from Hopi and his familiar surroundings, he became more enculturated to Western society and ideology. The more he learned how to behave or conduct himself in Anglo society, the more he was able to see the advantages of the Western culture, and also the down side of it. He began to make comparisons with his remembrances of Hopi and his present situation among the personnel surrounding him. Gradually he came to know the falsehoods of Western culture.

Within that time period he could see himself situated not between two worlds, but within the concentric intersection of Hopi and Western ideology. He began to see that structurally both cultures contained their positive characteristics, and their falsehoods that made up the underpinnings of those world views. His total rejection of everything Hopi during his high school days started to abate. So too did his total acceptance of everything Western. Instead, Peter saw the advantages of taking the best from both cultures and using those constructs to build and sharpen his philosophy of life. His world view, then, became constituted of his strong beliefs in Hopi teachings and his strong beliefs of the power of the ideology of Western culture.

Peter spent the majority of his life under the influence of Western culture. He knew much about its structure and its forces. What he lacked in his efforts to achieve a more stable balance in his life were the teachings of Hopi. To this end he pursued instruction in the Hopi language from an elder teaching at the university he attended. He formed an apprenticeship relationship with the elder to further discuss the teachings and the ideology of Hopi. It was at this time that I met him. Peter was committed to finishing his university degree and to enrolling in graduate school for advanced study in psychology. He was equally committed to revisiting his Hopi upbringing in order to learn those things Hopi that he missed during his elementary, junior high and high school education process. His plans were to return to his homeland and work with the people of his villages to help them deal with the influence of Western culture that was so exhaustive of the Hopi people.

Like Peter, Charlie grew up on a reservation immersed in the culture of his people, the Navajo. His relatives and extended family lived around the area and in nearby villages. There was much visiting back and forth which tended to widen the influence of the Navajo ways and the responsibility of enculturation.

The Navajo are a matrilineal society with the responsibility of training children left to the male relatives for the male children, and to the female relatives for the female children. In Charlie's

situation, because his father was absent much of the time, a scant few men and his female relatives were in attendance of his enculturation to Navajo.

His parents were raised on the reservation and attended the reservation boarding schools during the time of enforced English and the teaching of Euro-American social and cultural ideology. This situation was typical for other adults of his parents' generation, and for many of the children Charlie knew and grew up with. The interference of Western ways with the Navajo traditions caused many problems for the parents and the children. Alcoholism was the most prevalent problem that plagued the reservation. Many of the men, women and young adolescents drank as a result of their lost identities, and as a way to escape from their feelings of shame for being raised with the Navajo language and traditions.

His home life was characterized as very difficult. His parents were educated through the eighth grade. His father worked at various jobs in their village, mostly as an unskilled laborer. As time went on, his father worked at better jobs and his mother found work as a bookkeeper. For much of Charlie's time at home, his parents spent their weekends partying, so the children were left to fend for themselves. Early in life Charlie developed the traits of self sufficiency and of surrogate parent for his younger brother and sister.

A fundamental part of what his father learned in school was that, in the Western way of doing things, to be macho was the ultimate goal of all males. Charlie's childhood was spent being trained as a "tough guy" in order to survive. At the age of six, his father directed Charlie's breaking of a stallion for riding. No matter how often he fell off, his father would put him back up on the horse's back with the admonition to "not cry." The main ideals his father took from his schooling were that to be independent and individualistic was to be raised in the Western ways of doing things. The Navajo philosophy of living in harmony with all things was said to be a "weak" way to live one's life.

Charlie's first language is Navajo which he learned to speak from his mother, father and relatives. Although his parents were fluent speakers of Navajo, they often chose to speak English to their children in their home. Charlie's father was especially insistent on using English because he was taught in school that the English language and Western ways were a means to ensure success for himself and for his children. All of Charlie's aunts, uncles and grandparents were non speakers of English, so his contact with those relative was always in the context of Navajo. In the first several years of his life, until he was seven or eight, he used very little English; a word now and then. His faculty with English was primarily one of receptive usage.

When he began school, his parents worked at the boarding school nearby as dorm parents. Their main job was to keep an eye on the kids in the dorms and to keep order. Because Charlie did not live in the dorms, but had to spend much of his time around the dorms, he was often seen as one of the boarding school kids. Other than his parents, the dorm parents spoke only Navajo, so it was necessary for him to use Navajo when interacting with them. This was another way that he maintained his use of his heritage language outside of his home.

His great grandmother was an herbalist among the Navajo. Her reputation as a healer was renowned. People would travel from the far reaches of the land to receive her help. He learned from her many of the uses of herbs for healing and for maintaining the health of one's body. Her influence on him was very strong. She told him many stories of their history, of the teachings of Navajo and of the morals of conduct of Navajo people. It was through his time with her that he formed his basic philosophy of what it meant to be Navajo.

One of the basic tenets of Navajo beliefs she taught him was that everyone in their sphere had a purpose. Everyone had a role to play in the conduct of the culture, and in the maintenance of the language and the culture. He learned that the language and the culture were intertwined, and that with the loss of the language, there would be a loss of the culture embedded in those words and songs. He learned the principles of walking in harmony with the universe, and of maintaining one's self in beauty with the earth. She made sure he attended the ceremonies, the sings and the spiritual events, and that he learned the words to the songs and the chants.

When he entered school, he struggled with English. The context of learning was very different from his home where he first began to use English in a very minimal way. At school the rule was English only, a difficult task especially when he had to perform in front of his peers.

Along with other children in his similar situation, his John talk received much ridicule and caused him to feel shame and embarrassment about his ability to communicate and to learn this formal language structure. When he came home each afternoon from school, his parents were not able to help him with the correct pronunciation of the English. Their language was also Village English. Neither were they able to help him with his writing and reading. His transformation from a child at home to a student in school was most difficult because of his language limitations. He was not alone, however.

Many of the other children in school were struggling with this transformation. As was the case with many such schools on and near the reservations, the John talkers were marginalized from the flow of the main body of students and from progress in education. Those who spoke Village English held onto their group identity as a survival mechanism. They entered competitive sports where language was not the central measure of one's status. Their talents for football and basketball allowed them to maintain their hold on their small space within the school context. Outside of school they each went their separate ways due to the distances many of them had to go from the school to their homes. Charlie's house was twenty miles away, a bus ride of forty five minutes one way in good weather, but in the worst of weather could take two hours or more.

As they grew older, he and others like him continued to excel in physical activities. Charlie began to attend rodeos as a young child. He saw that here was a venue where no one was concerned with his language problems, paid little attention to his home situation, and did not measure him by his educational success or failure. The measure of the individual was based in the daring and the fortitude of one's performance and selection of events. The ultimate status event was the bull riding. The runner up to that was bronc riding. Young boys usually began their initiation to the rodeos riding calves, then steers, on to the broncos, then finally to the bulls. All rodeo events held a certain level of danger and risk, but none were as dangerous nor as difficult as riding eight seconds, holding onto a slim rope on the back of a ton and a half of an enraged bull.

While sports, rodeos and other physical events and activities provided a venue for exhibiting their competence and performance outside of school, education still remained an enigma for boys such as Charlie. His parents, based on their experiences, were advocates of an education as a means to success and survival in the Western society. In fact, they whole heartedly believed that without English, and without embracing Western ideology, they were doomed as a people. The result of such thinking necessitated the wholesale replacement of everything Navajo with Western thought and material culture. Instead of cultural cohesion as a basis for constructing a personal and cultural identity, Charlie found himself in a situation of cultural interference, not only at home, but also at school.

His early schooling was in a demonstration school where the curriculum was organized to promote cultural inclusion based on the needs of maintaining Navajo traditions and the necessity of Western education. The designers of the programs used curricula from both cultures interfaced with elders from the communities and state certified teachers. Efforts to maintain Navajo traditions in the school resulted in part of the curriculum being devoted to the Navajo language and the cultural traditions. Elders from the communities were employed as teachers in these areas of study. The materials and the methods were an admixture of Navajo and Western models of teaching, language from both cultures, and knowledge and ideology brought together from many differing perspectives. Some of the classes were inclusion models of pedagogy; some classes were exclusively one culture or the other. Charlie recalls his first encounters with and confusion over instructional artifacts such as plastic fruit, pictures and videos of Holstein milk cows, and two languages that used the same orthography, but differed greatly linguistically, culturally, and socially. Based on his earlier experiences with such things, he was taught that fruit, when it was available, was something to eat, the Hereford breed of cattle on the reservation were for producing beef, and that his heritage language was used in the context of cultural events, religious ceremonies, social gatherings and instruction from his elders.

Until he went to school, Charlie had no recollection of ever seeing Navajo in print, anywhere. Notices at the school and the trading post were in English. Printed handbills, announcements from the different governmental agencies, newspapers, signs and any other printed messages pertaining to regulations, events, job opportunities, and other such notices were in English. Print, then, in

Charlie's affective domain was from a different culture. It represented a Western function and purpose, stemming from a foreign perspective and agenda. On the other hand, the general news items, the noteworthy bits of information and the local conduct of cultural and social business were in the context of the Navajo oral tradition.

Eventually, through years of schooling over several generations, the English language was appearing in public places throughout the reservation. Signs, notices and advertisements were posted everywhere. Because Navajo was an oral tradition, there was no orthography for it. The English orthography became the basis for written Navajo. The problem as Charlie saw it was that many of the people for whom the notices were important, could not read either written English or written Navajo. He cited an example of a Traditional sheepherder standing with his flock at a watering place. A sign posted on a standard at the edge of the pond warned that the water was contaminated and not fit for humans or animals to drink. In the rush to bring in the English language, many misunderstandings were made about the efficacy of the language to benefit the people.

What the inclusion of Western thought and icons into the curriculum accomplished for Charlie was to interfere with his sense of Self as a culture bearer. He had no way to ground these new ideas into his schema of Navajo teachings. The learning he experienced in the tutelage of his grandmother taught him to accept all things in his affective domain with tolerance and patience. Everything in life had a function, people had a role they played in the cultural milieu, yet Charlie was left without a way to scaffold the unfamiliar curricular components onto his Navajo enculturation. He was not alone in this situation. Other children, and the adults and caregivers in his cultural and social venue experienced similar disruption and interference with the tenets of Navajo.

What Charlie saw and watched throughout his life was the rush among many of his people to embrace the new Western ideology. They accepted that this new way of doing and thinking was the key to their survival as a people faced with the enormous presence of Western culture all around them and in their schools. What he further saw was that the people who accepted these new ideas wholesale, did not try to understand the underpinnings of the thoughts and the behavior. In a large sense they experienced similar feelings of interference as Charlie. The breech in the life flow of the community contributed to a great sense of confusion affecting the dynamics of cultural cohesion and social expectations. Not all people were caught up in this swirl of ideological malaise, however.

The Traditionals living in the far reaches of the Navajo Nation stayed away from the new ideology. They chose to not take part in the conjunction of the two cultures. One way they resisted was to keep their children away from the schools, hiding them when the authorities came around looking for truant children. The Traditionals chose between maintaining their cultural heritage, or breaking their cohesive bonds and admitting Western ideology, causing an upset in their balance with all things. For most of the Navajos living in the remote areas, the Navajo traditions learned through enculturation practices fit the needs of the parents and the children. When the children did go to school, the parents had certain expectations about what would be taught, the language used for instruction, and the agenda of the institutions. Not surprising, there were large differences between parental expectations and the expectations of the schools resulting in a rift in relations.

There was much conflict within the family nuclei, and within the extended families as well. On the one hand, the families needed to understand why going to school was important. Often times the children came to understand, but the families did not, so there were problems within the family cores. On the other hand, the institutions saw it as their duties to instill Western ideas and icons into the children as a means for them to cope with the changing world. However, the life styles in the remote areas of the Navajo had changed very little over time. In reality, the ideology of the Western culture more often than not was in conflict with the ideology of the Navajo. Children in school were taught to think and to conduct themselves in a certain manner; that way of behaving was counter to the traditions of the Navajo people.

The cultural models of social intercourse were in direct conflict with the traditions of the Navajo. In the schools, the children were punished for using their heritage language, yet they did

not have the competencies to communicate in English. This predicament served to divide the students; to sidetrack their education because the teachers did not know how to cope with them in their regular classrooms. On the other hand, the elders and the traditional tribal members chastised the children for not using Navajo, or not being able to understand the language, the songs and the chants, and for not being able to participate fully in the ceremonies. Whenever a healing ceremony was needed for a non speaker, a translator was called upon to help or to recite the words for the patient. When the prayers were said in English instead of in Navajo, there was a great loss of meaning. As Charlie put it, there was a dilution of the power of the spiritual connection between the medicine man and the patient who needed to blessing.

When he finished high school, Charlie worked at odd jobs around the reservation, then made his way to a major city some distance away to find work. It was there that he decided to attend the university. He set his mind to the task, finishing in four years. However, throughout his tenure in the university, language continued to plague him. His studies not only involved the mastery of the subjects, but the mastery of the language that accompanied those studies. Upon completion of his degree, he applied to several veterinarian schools only to be turned down. Discouraged, but not surprised, he left the city and returned to the reservation. There he worked at various jobs for several years, eventually arriving at a decision to apply for medical school. To his delight he was accepted. It was during his second year in medical school that he and I met.

The discontinuity he experienced with his Navajo heritage, brought on by the Western influences from school and to some degree by his parents, spanned most of his lifetime. However, as he matured and grew cognitively, he began to regain his sense of identity first established through his grandmother. When Charlie left high school and entered the city, his ideas continued to solidify concerning the survival of his people and the need for understanding and dealing with Western thought. He saw that the two cultures had much good to offer in combination with each other. He conceptualized this as not a trade of one aspect of traditional culture for one aspect of Western culture, but as adding the positive forces of both to become a stronger person. In his unique position as a medical student, he clearly saw that modern medicine and traditional medicine do not conflict with one another. Indeed, they complimented each other: modern medicine addressing the biological and physiological aspects of human healing; traditional medicine tackling the mending of the spiritual essence of human beings. The picture for Charlie was one of holistic medicine necessitating both modern and traditional approaches.

Like Peter, Charlie worked hard to succeed in Western culture, and at the same time maintain and renew his Navajo heritage and language. Within his busy schedule in medical school, he made time to return to the reservation to attend events, sings, chants and ceremonies. He put himself on a regulated schedule of ceremonies to maintain his balance with all things. Charlie was well acquainted with the ideology of Navajo and of Western culture. He believed that there was much that the two could contribute to a person to make a more complete Self. His objective was to finish his medical training, then return to the reservation on a permanent basis to work with and among his people. His experiences over his lifetime, and his perceptions of the two disparate cultures were his strengths as a culture bearer for helping his people to deal with the influences of Western ideology that were so pervasive throughout the reservation.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The data presented in this study clearly pointed out that growing up literate on a Reservation is a complex and challenging experience for American Indian children. The cultural cohesion of the groups was in tension with the influences coming from outside forces. Cultural interference was a fundamental part of how and to what extent parents and other members of the heritage groups could mediate the decisions and the actions of their children. The beliefs and the values held by their parents, as a result of their life experiences, combined to help form the values and the belief systems of the two men. The cultural world views of the extended families further contributed to the formation of these systems.

The relationships and the associations they formed with peers inside and outside of their tribal groups at times were at odds with their families' attitudes and belief systems. Their divided interests between traditional and Euro-American ways were a fundamental part of the cultural cohesion and cultural interference that existed within their societies.

This study's significance is in the demonstration that heritage language loss and the lack of cultural transmission do not necessarily come about through cultural discontinuity between the institutions of minority and majority cultures. It showed that English literacy and adherence to traditional ways can exist and function within the same community. The impetus for cultural cohesion, however, is dependent on the personal agenda of each member of the group.

The study suggests that elders and relatives can provide support and programs that enhance the traditions and further enculturate their children. This is especially relevant in this era where children are caught between the need for English literacy and the necessity of maintaining and transmitting the heritage language and the culture. This study showed that it was possible to achieve in both realms without wholesale replacement of one set of beliefs and traditions for another. The two men chose the best and most positive aspects and concepts from both influences in order to situate their identities within a larger intersection of the two disparate cultures.

The choices and the experiences revealed the dynamics of cohesion and interference within the processes of socialization and enculturation. The project implies that minority school achievement and failure goes deeper than the accepted view of cultural insensitivity and non-alignment of belief systems of minority and dominant groups. The study can benefit Reservation communities by suggesting shifts in language policies and ways of perceiving social processes that promote and support Indian education and English literacy acquisition without replacing traditions and philosophical underpinnings.

Notes

1 The term "John" was their name for people, children and adults alike, who spoke English with an "accent." It was used as a derogatory word, implying that the speaker did not really know how to pronounce or use conventional English. Johns and those who spoke John were on the margins of the social milieu in contexts where conventional English was the norm. They were perceived as having a lower status in the community. Many of these people were fluent speakers of their heritage languages (Navajo, Hopi, Apache, Innuit, etc.), but struggled mightily with English. Usually they learned their English in their day to day interactions within their communities, not in any formalized ESL programs.

"John" is used in this paper because that is the way the informants referred to themselves and to other people in the same situations. The proper term is Village English, a description of this language phenomenon established by William Leap. Village English is a language, not a dialect, creole, pidgin, or a vernacular. For further reading see:

Leap, W. (1991). Pathways and Barriers to Indian Language Literacy-Building on the Northern Ute Reservation. Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 22, 1, pp 21-41.

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